Written Testimony of

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President of Morehouse School of Medicine

Before

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee

Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space

Wednesday, February 27, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to express my views on S.414 the "National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Digital Network Technology Program Act" a measure that would provide funding for technology at minority-serving institutions.

I am Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., President of Morehouse School of Medicine and former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. I appear before you today as immediate past President of the Council of Presidents of the Atlanta University Center (AUC). The purpose of my testimony today is to discuss the technological advances made by the AUC schools and to describe the need for funding for technology and telecommunications infrastructure, networking and student access to computers.

HISTORY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY CENTER

Founded in 1929, the AUC is the nation's oldest and largest consortium of predominately African- American institutions of higher learning.

Its six member institutions --- Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morris Brown College, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine and Spelman College --- share a common mission of providing quality education for African-Americans and other students from diverse backgrounds. These students are our leaders for tomorrow --- in education, law, health care, engineering, government and other areas.

Mr. Chairman, all six schools recognize the importance of staying abreast of rapidly evolving technology and we are regularly applying new technology in our academic offerings, and our student living and learning environments on our respective campuses.

For example, in the year 2000, Morehouse College received a grant from the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration for renovating and expanding a Technology Tower Complex which will be used, among other things, to address the shortage of educated and trained personnel in the telecommunications industry by providing job training and employment for students and residents of the West End community in Atlanta.

Spelman College has begun installation of a "Campus Pipeline", which will provide a seamless

integration of administrative services, campus internet offerings, web-based e-mail, long-distance learning resources and a virtual campus community.

Clark Atlanta University is applying technology to address increased student enrollment through networking and computer training. Clark Atlanta University's "Distance Learning Initiative" allows students from across the country to take classes and participate in lectures using a two-way interactive communications system.

Morris Brown College has implemented a Technology Assessment Program, which consists of six levels of computer and Web-based training, allowing students to become proficient in Web-based technology.

The Interdenominational Theological Center has received funding from the Lilly Endowment for its Information Technology for the Theological Teaching Program. This program emphasizes faculty training for use of technology in the classroom.

This year, the National Center for Primary Care will open on the campus of Morehouse School of Medicine. This center will be a key resource in using technology to determine how to expand access to high quality, cost-effective healthcare for underserved populations, and how to increase the proportion of under-represented minorities in the health professions.

Despite the lack of adequate funding for technological advancements at HBCUs, AUC schools are making significant gains in closing the digital divide.

With technology infrastructure and training in place, these schools will be able to develop network applications that can enhance teaching methods and educational resources, strengthen the quality of education, promote innovations and increase competitiveness.

The accomplishments of the AUC schools are illustrative of the steps HBCUs are taking to close the digital divide. And while the actions described here show progress, there remains a high demand for more technology at HBCUs.

LACK OF TECHNOLOGY AT HBCUS

A digital divide exists between HBCUs and majority institutions. This divide affects the ability of minority-serving institutions to be competitive with other institutions of higher learning. Further, the limited financial resources of African-American students makes it difficult for them to purchase their own computers.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Report released in 2000, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Assessment of Networking and Connectivity*, fewer than 25 percent of HBCU students own their own computers and must rely on institutional resources to connect to the Internet, World Wide Web or other networks. This compares to 49 percent of

students at other institutions of higher learning.

This lack of modern, available computer technology affects the ability of minority-serving institutions to be competitive with other institutions of higher learning in the information age.

Access to resources for information technology is critical if HBCUs are to continue to prepare students to take an active part and contribute to the country's economic growth and prosperity.

PROPOSED RESPONSE

Senators Cleland, Hollings and Stevens have taken a significant step in narrowing the technology gap between HBCUs and majority institutions. We applaud them for introducing a measure that would authorize up to $250 million to create a program to provide grants to minority-serving institutions for technology infrastructure and training.

Specifically, this legislation would provide funds for: (1) the acquisition of computers, technology, other instrumentation and software; (2) the acquisition of telecommunications systems hardware; and (3) training for students and faculty.

But this is just a beginning. Further studies should be conducted to provide a more detailed assessment of the extent of the digital divide, how it affects the ability of HBCUs to be competitive with other institutions of higher learning and what steps should be taken to close this gap.

CONCLUSION

Measures contained in S.414 are vital to American Higher Education. I encourage the Congress to pass the "National Telecommunications and Information Administration Digital Network Program Act." This measure will expand the information highway, ensuring that no student is left behind in the use of technology in the 21st century because of differences in income, education and race.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you might have.